

Our Faith will get us through this (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)
Cumberland UMC
March 29, 2020

¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Recently, the statement I shared with members of Cumberland in the March 18, 2020 correspondence was quoted in the South Carolina United Methodist Advocate. As you may recall, I stated, we are encountering uncharted territory. In all of my years as a pastoral leader, I have never encountered anything close to what I am encountering with any group of parishioners. Yet, I am still confident that we will be able to get through this current crisis as a people of faith if we do our part in adhering to the directives given by our state, national and church leaders.

What does that mean for us today? For me, it means that even though we have been inconvenienced by COVID-19 or the Coronavirus, we should still be able to function as God fearing individuals. Sure, life as we know it today is different! What we often took for granted is now longed for. Oh, how some of us would love to be able to gather with others and not feel like we might be putting ourselves in harm's way of being exposed to COVID-19 or the Coronavirus. Those of us who are experiencing "cabin fever" are struggling with being confined to our homes for an extended period of time. Recalling how we would get in our vehicles to share a meal with family and friends in our favorite restaurants seems to be a blur for us today. If the establishment is not providing take-outs, we are left to preparing meals at home and even that has become somewhat cumbersome because some of us have experienced that when we go to our favorite grocery store to shop, the selection is very scarce and we have to choose from what is left over.

Enough of what we are challenged with as we live in our new norm, the passage of scripture chosen for today's message appears to speak to where we are today. God's word is longstanding and never outdated. Therefore, I invite us to reflect on what is written in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. Seemingly, these persons connected to the church at Corinth are dealing with a situation that is uncomfortable and undesirable. What better person to assist them in their time of distress than Apostle Paul who is credited with writing this book. If anyone knew, Paul knew what it was like to be troubled. He knew what it meant to have to deal with circumstances that came to him not of his own choosing.

Instead of focusing on what he could not change or control, I see the writer saying to the church he was fond of that they could use their current circumstance as a platform to build on their faith. They would do this by not focusing on what was presently going on but on what was to come. I don't think Paul was telling the people to deny that they were struggling or having problems. What he appears to be doing for them is trying to get them to see that their encounters would not be forever. Eventually they would get some reprieve from what they are having to deal with. That's a good word for each of us. COVID-19 or Coronavirus will not trouble us indefinitely! At some point, we will be able to resume a more preferred daily norm.

Yes, it's true, we have been significantly inconvenienced. We may even appear to be helpless due to what we are presently confronted with. My hope for each of us as we deal with the epidemic in our midst is to believe that our faith can get us through this. Instead of looking at what we have lost due to the Coronavirus, try to focus on what we can gain as a result of being inconvenienced. This is a time that each of us can grow in our individual faith walk and also be drawn closer to God and others in a way we might not have if circumstances were as we would like them to be. Today, ask God to help you and others grow from this experience!